SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DENSITY STANDARDS.

CITY OF REGINA.
URBAN PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

MARCH, 1988.

March 23, 1988
File: 4800

To: Secretary
Regina Planning Commission

Re: Suburban Residential Density

Context

Terms of reference for a study of residential density in Regina's suburban growth areas were approved in April, 1987. The study arose from the recognition that density objectives set in the 1979 Development Plan have not been met. The study purpose was to "review and determine achievable residential standards, that will provide for a good living environment with affordable urban infrastructure".

A copy of a report, describing the study results is attached.

Purpose

The purpose, in bringing this report forward at this time is to expose the conclusions reached for a wider discussion and debate, and to establish the linkage between this subject and the other studies, actions or initiatives that are being or will be undertaken.

Discussion

The conclusion reached, with respect to the affordability of the urban infrastructure in the suburban growth areas, is that density is not a significant factor. That being the case however, a number of important questions are raised regarding currently accepted standards and policies. These questions include whether we should put any limits on our urban boundaries, whether regardless of the level of patronage all areas of the City should have transit service and whether we should actively encourage inner-city growth in preference to suburban expansion (see pages 24 and 25 in the attached report). The answers to these questions can only be found in a comprehensive analysis of information and opportunities.

It is certainly possible to maintain a laissez-faire attitude toward the suburban density issue. This would imply having the "market" dictate urban growth policies. Before accepting this approach, it is worthwhile reviewing other options. There is a linkage between the stated City policy of encouraging housing in the downtown and inner-city neighbourhoods and the adoption of policies (or not) respecting suburban growth areas.

Other Studies, Actions and Initiatives

a) Fiscal Impact Models

Other cities have set out to determine the comparative costs of different suburban growth options. The City of Edmonton has a computerized Fiscal Impact Model. Officials from the Edmonton Planning department have stated that:

i) the model provides comparative cost information but not real costs;
ii) varying the development density was not significant to infrastructural costs; and
iii) a major benefit of the model is that it provides different city departments with better information and a clearer picture of the real distribution of development costs.

We are in contact with the Edmonton planners and will attempt to develop a Fiscal Impact Model suited to Regina's needs. This could provide the basis for future reviews of our hectarage assessment fees, etc.

b) Downtown Residential Use

Preliminary work has been undertaken to determine ways of encouraging new residential development in Regina's downtown. A number of specific recommendations have been made.

Residential development in downtown and the inner-city must be seen in the context of actions and policies associated into suburban growth. In Regina, in both procedural and financial terms it is much easier to carry out development in the suburbs. As a generalization, Reginans prefer to live in the suburbs. Unless these conditions are modified attempts at encouraging inner-city growth will continue to have limited success.

c) Neighbourhood Plans

The preparation of plans for inner-city neighbourhoods is an on-going process. The adoption of the Transitional Area plan, in 1983, resulted in a considerable reduction in the potential for high rise and high density multi-unit development. The Cathedral Area plan, now in the process of implementation and the General Hospital Area plan now under discussion, will also reduce higher density opportunities.

Decisions with respect to providing for a density mix in the suburban growth areas, on vacant inner-city land including surplus school sites and in inner-city neighbourhoods must be coordinated.

d) Rail Relocation Plans

If the Phase 1 plan is implemented then C.N. Yard area will ultimately become available for mixture of higher and low density residential growth; and, a barrier to continuing expansion in the northwest sector will be established. If the plan is not implemented then Regina can expect to have an even larger proportion of its new housing needs met in the form of single detached dwellings in an unconstrained northwest sector.

Phase 2 would provide the opportunity for high density residential growth close to the downtown.

e) Suburban Concept Plans

In the 1979 Development Plan, suburban density objectives were established in the concept plans. The Southeast Sector Plan was updated and adopted in 1987 with density guidelines that reflect the status quo rather than those of the 1979 plan. The Northwest Sector Plan is in the process of being updated. Very preliminary work has been undertaken with respect to a Southwest Sector Plan and no density objectives have as yet been set for this area.

f) Initiatives and Innovations

From time to time Senior Government initiatives have resulted in the development of higher density residential dwellings. The Federally sponsored M.U.R.B. program was a major initiative. The Provincially sponsored infill-housing program undertaken by the Saskatchewan Housing Corp. was another successful initiative.

There are no similar programs available today. Initiatives are being taken in other cities, such as the successful Core Area Initiatives program in Winnipeg. In our ongoing research we have not yet found a program easily adaptable to the Regina scene.

Conclusions

Our studies to date have found that, insofar as the costs of providing the necessary urban infrastructure is concerned, variations in the residential density in suburban growth areas is not a significant factor. The objectives of the 1979 Development Plan, while stated in density terms, were really for achieving some social objectives and, a variety of dwelling types in suburban areas. This is sometimes reffered to as a housing mix.

There are methods available to achieve the housing mix objective. To be successful however, these objectives must be set on a comprehensive basis. This report attempts to set the stage for such a comprehensive planning strategy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The attached report entitled "Suburban Residential Density Standards" dated December, 1987, be released for review and discussion among interested parties;

2. The Administration be instructed to develop a procedure on a comprehensive basis, that will lead to finding answers to the questions raised in the attached report; and

3. That this report be RECEIVED and FILED.

Respectfully submitted

City Manager

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SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DENSITY STANDARDS

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March, 1988

DENSITY
SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report contains a review of suburban residential density as it affects the provision of an AFFORDABLE URBAN INFRASTRUCUTRE, and the provision of a GOOD LIVING ENVIRONMENT. Comparative information was developed for the North-West, the South-East and the East suburban sectors (see map on page 5).

In 1966 the City introduced a development fee mechanism that was intended to meet the estimated capital costs of suburban developments. The fee, known as hectarage assessment, is applied uniformly to all new subdivisions without regard to density or other variables. The hectarage assessment charge is reviewed annually and is calculated from estimated costs. Therefore, if it is found that the capital costs of providing the sewer and water mains, the development of parks and arterial streets, etc. is not being met, then the hectarage fee is increased. In 1966 the hectarage fee was roughly $2000 per hectare and in 1987 it is almost $50,000 per hectare. Increases or decreases in residential density will not have any direct impact on the affordability of the urban infrastructure in capital cost terms.

The continuing operating costs of City services and infrastructure are paid either out of taxes or through user charges or both. The study found in some sectors more than others, that there is a correlation between residential density and property assessment. Generally the higher the density the higher the assessed values per hectare. However, it was also found that the lowest density sector, the South-East, has the highest assessed values per hectare. Also, in the South-East sector, density increases do not result in assessment increases. Density therefore, is only one of a number of variables. Socio-economic factors can be of greater consequence.

Costs are clearly not being met in the provision of some City services. Transit is the obvious example. Residents of the more dense North-West sector do make greater use of the transit service than residents of the South-East Sector. However, again it appears to be soci-economic factors that are the cause rather than density in itself.

Insofar as the AFFORDABILITY OF THE URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE is concerned, the conclusions drawn from this study are:

1. for capital expenditures, variable densities in the suburbs is not significant; and
2. for operating expenditures, density does affect assessed values and therefore tax revenues. However, density is only one of a number of variables and not necessarily the most important.

The provision of a GOOD LIVING ENVIRONMENT is a subjective matter. The living environment is different in high vs. low density situations. Different people need different living conditions and provided those differences can be found somewhere in the City, good living environments can be available to all. On the living environment aspect, this study has raised some questions. These questions, which focus on the concept of "what kind of a City do we want" are set out on pages 24 and 25 of this report.

CONTEXT

In April of 1987, the Regina Planning Commission approved the Terms of Reference for a study of suburban residential densities in Regina. The study arose out of the recognition that the density standards for new subdivisions, that had been established in 1979 as part of Regina's Development Plan, were not being met. The following table illustrates the difference between the proposed and the as-built densities for three separate sectors in the City.

	1979 Policy	1987 Actual Achievement
S.E. Sector (University Park etc)	10 u.p.a. 24 u.p.h.	5.6 u.p.a. 14 u.p.h.
East Sector (Glencairn etc)	10 u.p.a. 24 u.p.h.	7.2 u.p.a. 18 u.p.h.
Northwest Sector (Rochdale etc)	10 - 20 u.p.a. 24 - 49 u.p.h.	6.1 u.p.a. 15 u.p.h.

The 1979 policy objectives were adopted following the decade of the 70's, a time of Canadian and Prairie optimism and growth. It was the ambition of the policy makers that a number of social and environmental goals could be achieved using this density objective. Such a result seemed probable in light of the relatively strong demand for housing, since it was thought that the mix of high and low density housing would result in a socio-economic mix of people.

Since 1979, the City's density expectations have been reduced and recent subdivision approvals have been at densities at or below 5 u.p. acre (12 u.p. hectare). Among the reasons for the approval of these reduced densities is the insistence on the part of the development industry that Saskatchewan and Regina residents demand these low densities. They are building for a market, and whether that is good for the City in the urban context is no longer clear.

PURPOSE

This progress report outlines the preliminary conclusions that have been reached. This report is intended to provide the basis for a wider discussion of the important issues. The preliminary conclusions follow from the study purpose that was described in April 1987 as follows:

> "-To review and determine achievable residential density standards that will provide for a good living environment with affordable urban infrastructure in Regina's growth areas."

THE 1979 OBJECTIVES

The introductory statement under the heading of Suburban Growth in the "1979 R.S.V.P. Planning Strategy" reads as follows:

> "The post-war population boom, combined with the increase in national prosperity and the increasing popularity of the automobile during the late 1940's and 1950's, gave rise to unprecedented peripheral growth in Canadian cities.
>
> This type of development - low density, unplanned sprawl, has created many problems, both physical and financial, which cities must begin to cope with, as they face ever-increasing financial pressures."

The words "unplanned sprawl" are an unfortunate choice. In an unplanned sprawl situation there would be problems, irrespective of any density considerations. The perceived problems of the day lead to the definition of a series of seven policy objectives which were as follows:

"1. To ensure that future peripheral residential growth occurs in accordance with approved plans contained in the Municipal Development Plan, as piecemeal ad hoc residential development is often costly in terms of public expenditure (eg., infrastructure, schools, fire and police protection, recreation, community facilities and public transit).

2. To ensure that planned suburban growth and the City's capital programming be highly integrated since growth on the City's periphery is costly in terms of infrastructure.

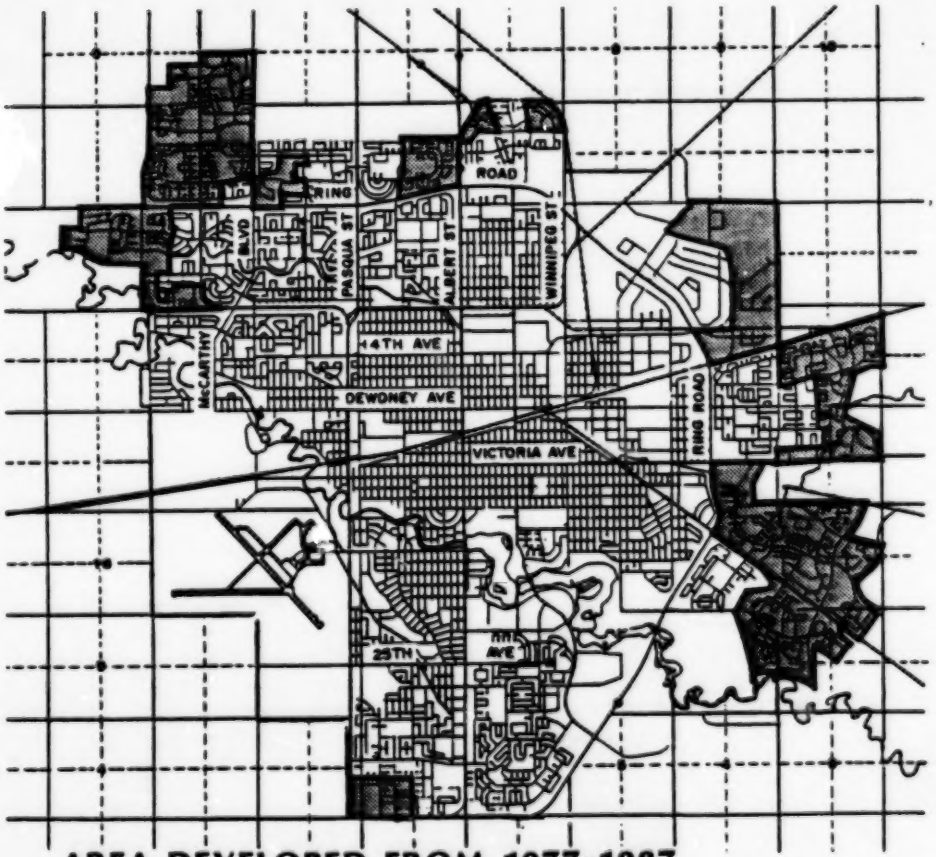
3. To continue and expand the City's role as land developer in promoting the development of new types of housing through the use of land assembly programs and CMHC housing programs.

4. **TO INCREASE SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES IN ORDER TO REDUCE SERVICING COSTS, PRESERVE PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND, AND FACILITATE PUBLIC TRANSIT.**

5. To maintain a desireable balance between inner city/suburban growth and city wide housing demand in order to avoid artificial supply deficiencies and a resulting increase in the cost of housing.

6. To rationalize future suburban retail growth in terms of city wide objectives - downtown, possible CPR yard redevelopment.

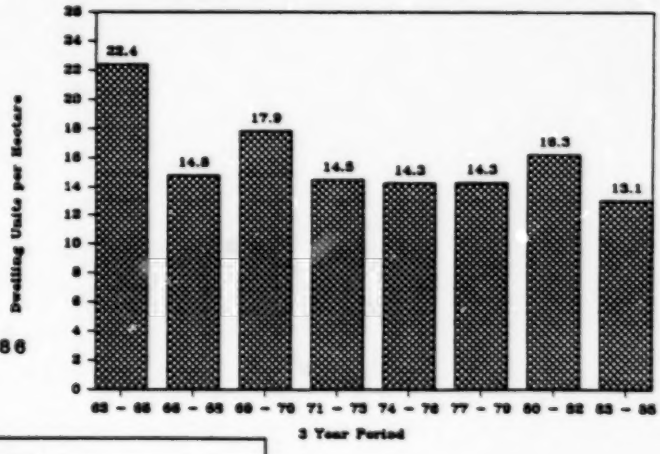
7. To protect the major entrances to the City."



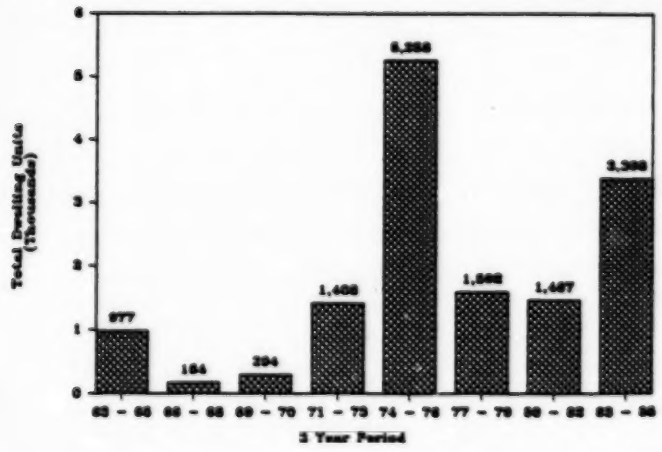
AREA DEVELOPED FROM 1977-1987

Only one of the seven objectives, namely number four, refers either directly or indirectly to density. Three reasons are given for the need to increase densities. The reference to a reduction in servicing costs, had as its objective the desire to keep housing prices at a reasonably low level. The need to preserve agricultural land was the reason given by the Province in 1978, for limiting the expansion of the City's boundaries by annexation. Given a demonstrated need for a larger urban area the boundaries will be expanded again. The provision of public transit remains based upon a set of independent criteria that do not necessarily have a relationship to density.

The density policy objectives of 1979, appear to have been based upon the concepts of the day. They did not have the benefit of extensive research on the background information that has since become available.



3. Density of Suburban Construction 1963 to 1986



2. Suburban Units Constructed 1963 to 1986

HECTARAGE ASSESSMENTS

In 1969, the City of Regina introduced the hectarage assessment procedure which is a form of a development fee to cover the capital costs of development. Over the past 18 years adjustments have been made and today the fee structure is reviewed annually. In 1987, the hectarage assessment fee structure is as follows:

$15,810 per hectare - for	a) Arterial Roads
$ 6,880 per hectare - for	b) Water Mains
$11,310 per hectare - for	c) Trunk Sewers
$12,800 per hectare - for	d) Parks & Recreation Facilities
$ 1,840 per hectare - for	e) Inspection Fee
$48,640 TOTAL PER HECTARE	

It is proposed that the hectarage assessment rate for 1988 be increased by an inflation figure of 4.8% to a total of $50,970.00 per hectare.

These assessments apply for all subdivisions throughout the city today. In 1969, not only was the fee structure much lower but there was a difference for subdivisions that were developed north and south of the CP Mainline right-of-way.

North - $700 per acre ($1,730 per hectare)
South - $900 per acre ($2,225 per hectare)

There are some differences in the characteristics, and probably the costs associated with the different subdivisions in different sectors of the City. However, a uniform hectarage assessment rate has been established in order to provide equality among the developers no matter what the size of their land holdings or the actual location.

This particular approach is reasonable when applied to undeveloped suburban lands that are being subdivided out of farmland. However, a different approach can be justified for inner-City lands that are the subject of a resubdivision. A separate study is presently underway to determine whether all or parts of the hectarage assessment fee could be waived for inner City subdivisions. A special charge could be imposed, if it were deemed essential, to cover costs for infrastrucutral needs on inner-City lands.

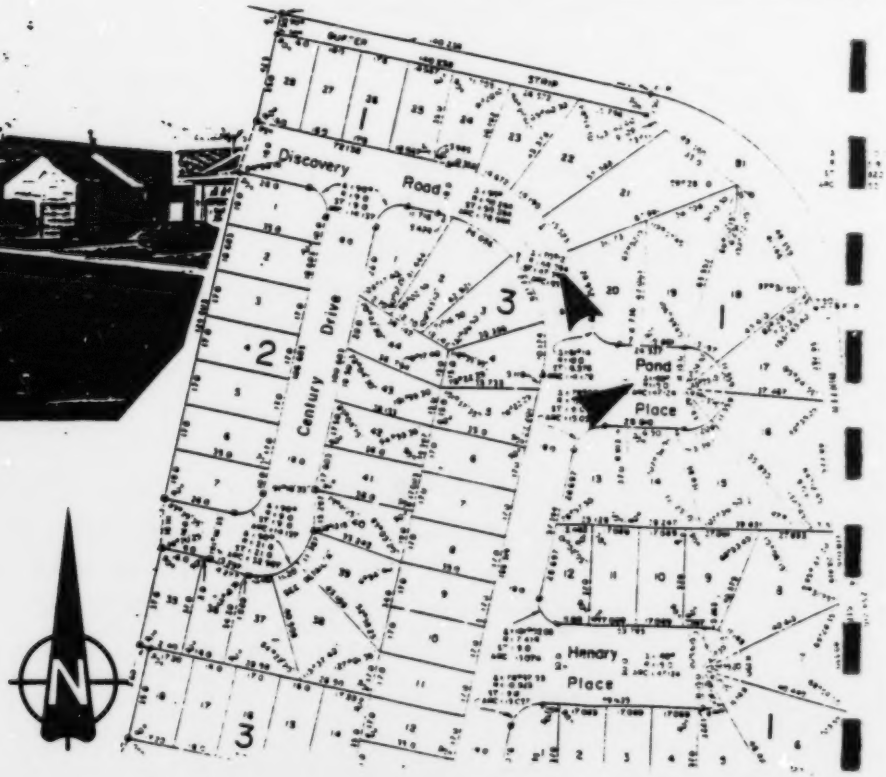
It has been proposed that measures be taken to encourage inner-City residential development and this is the subject of a concurrent study. Consideration is being given to the concept that hectarage assessments and other forms of special charges should not be imposed on inner-City developments, and at the same time suburban developments should pay the full amount to meet the infrastructural costs.

The hectarage assessment does not, and is not intended to, cover all the development costs. The direct costs of local streets, local sewer and water, etc. mains, sidewalks, and the initial development of parks and open spaces within the subdivision, (as well as the proportionate cost to the developer of the hectarage assessment), are paid by the developers and then passed on to the purchasers of homes.

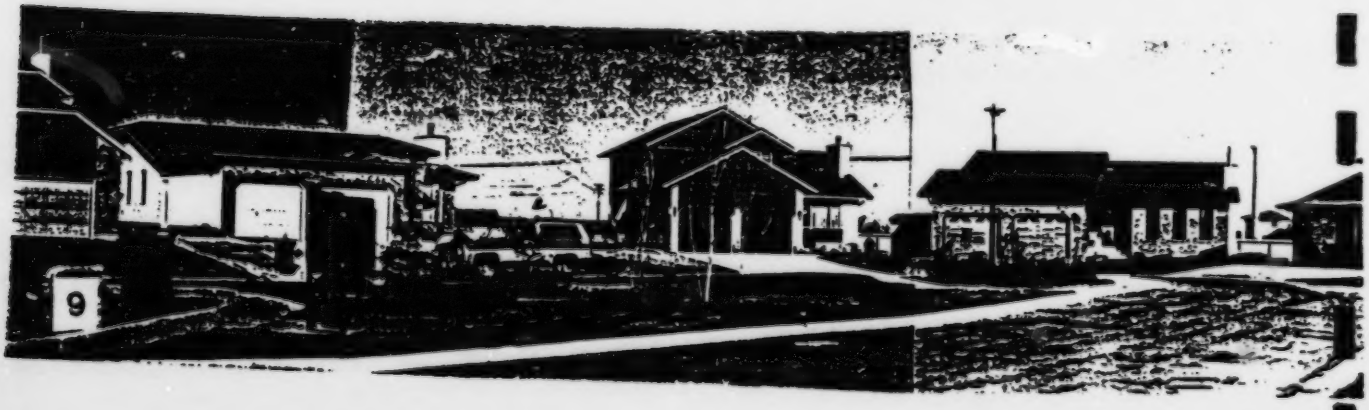
The development fee procedure is quite common in cities throughout North America. Regina's hectarage assessment procedure is calculated to ensure that the real capital costs of the trunk services, major recreation facilities and roads are met. At an average net density of 16 u.p. hectare the proportionate share of the hectarage assessment amounts to approximately $4,000 per residential lot. This dollar figure will apply to property located in the City's various growth areas.

DENSITY RANGE - ±10.0
(dwelling units/hectare)

9th	Avenue	North	
REG'D	PLAN	No.	FK1207
REG'D	PLAN	No.	FK4838

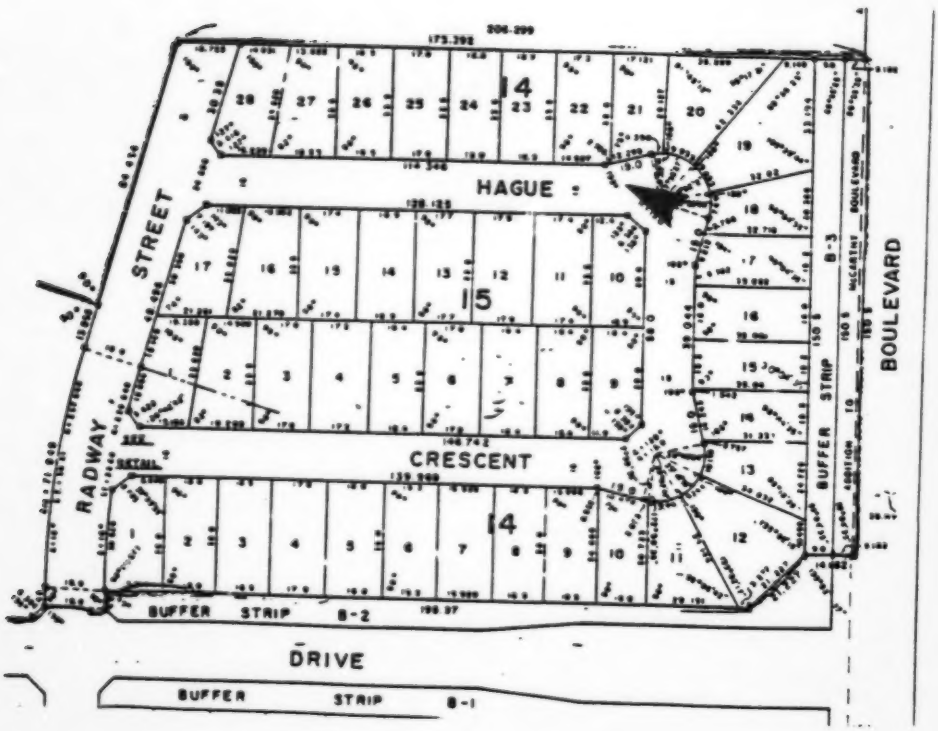


AVERAGE LOT WIDTH 17m–19m

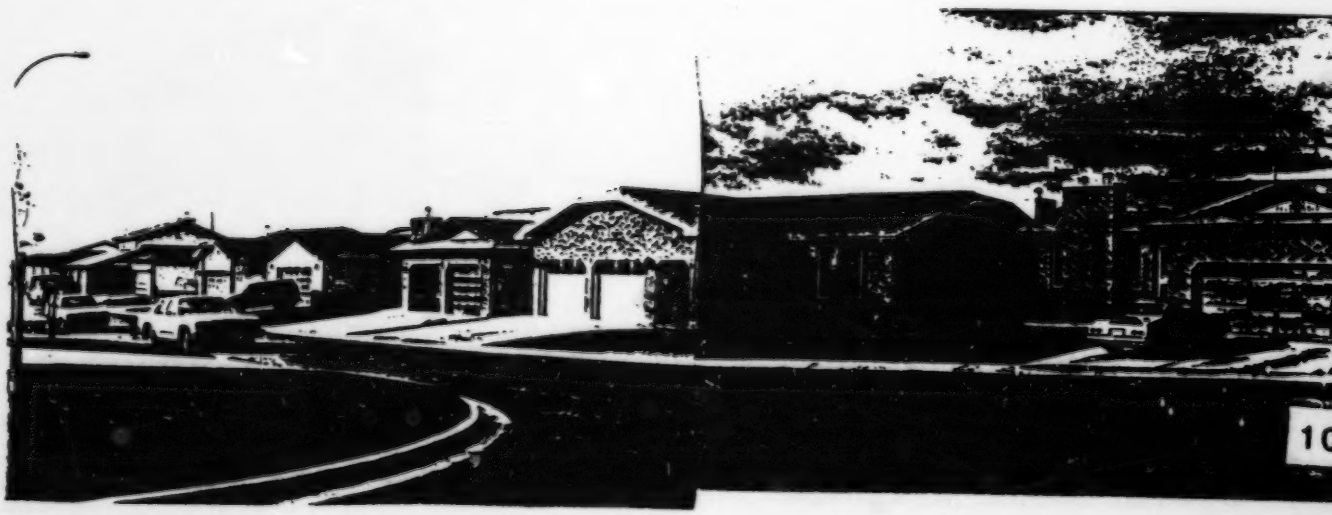


DENSITY RANGE - ±13.0

(dwelling units/hectare)

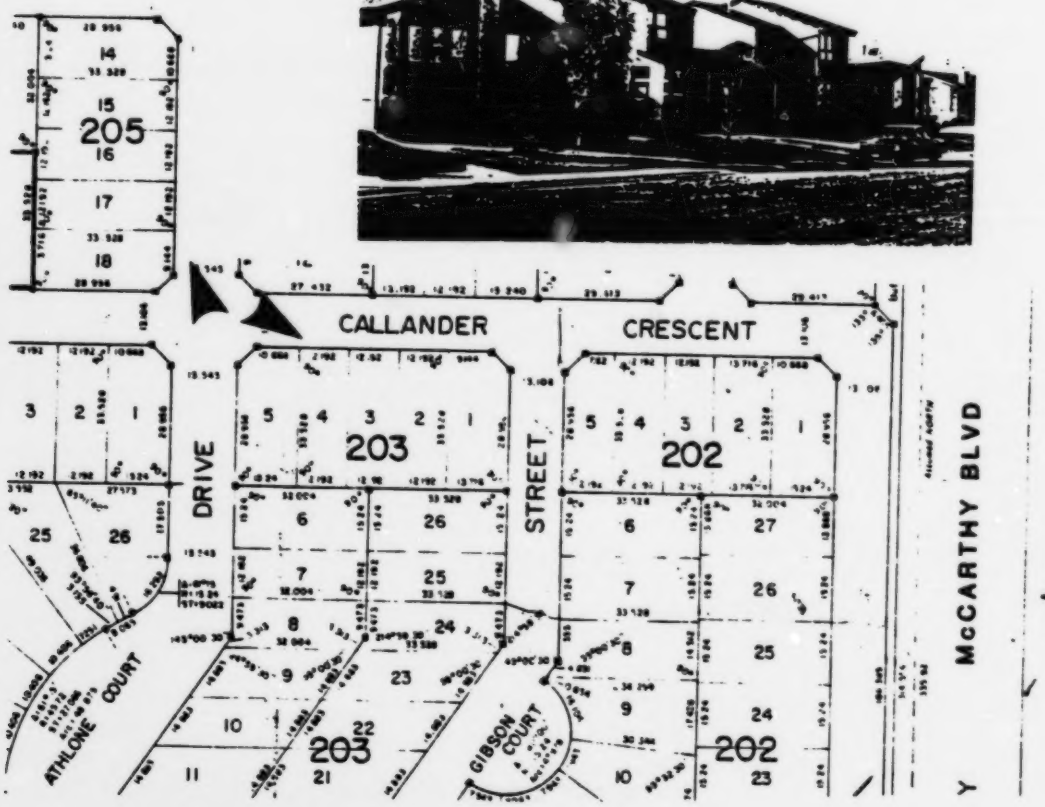


AVERAGE LOT WIDTH 15m-17m



DENSITY RANGE - ±21.0

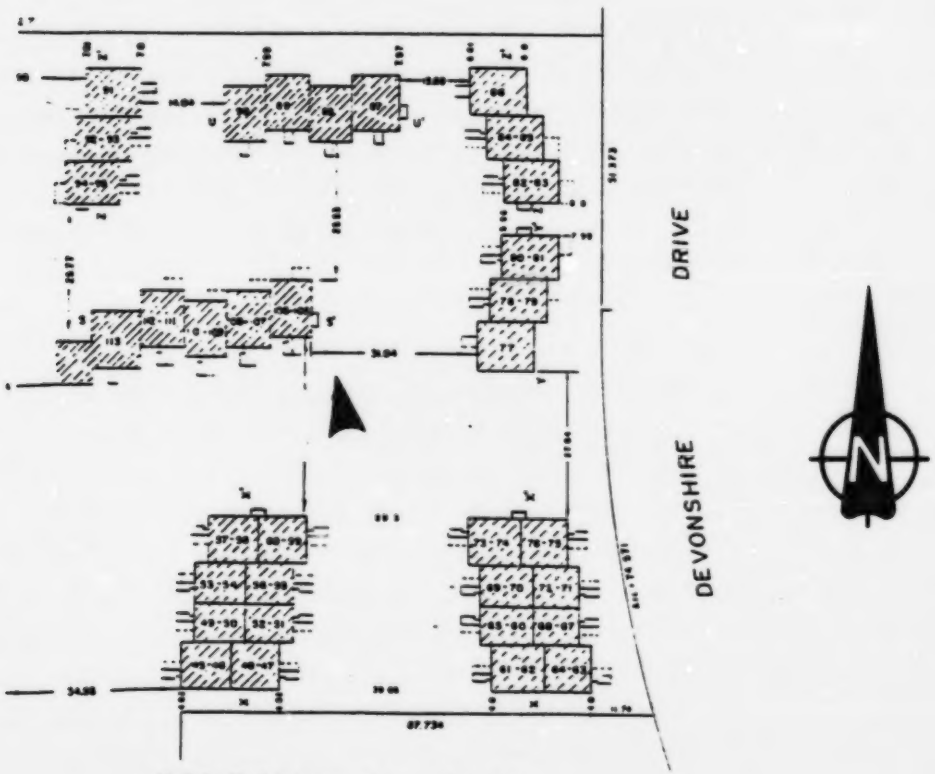
(dwelling units hectare)



AVERAGE LOT WIDTH 12m–15m

DENSITY RANGE- ±40

(dwelling units / hectare)



CONDOMINIUM PLAN

OTHER CITY PROCEDURES

Regina's new suburban areas benefit from many city services. For the purpose of the following outline, a distinction has been drawn between capital costs and operating costs for City services. The assumption is made that the capital cost of City services is essentially covered either in the hectarage assessment procedure or in the direct costs applied by the development process. Payment for the many City services that are of a continuing nature, is made either through taxation or through a user fee procedure. or a combination of both.

Water - which is charged directly to residential units on the basis of consumption. The more you use the more you pay. City Council recently established that the capital costs incurred in any expansion of the water facilities at Buffalo Pound or elsewhere should be self financing through the water rates. No independent research, in the context of this particular study has been undertaken to determine whether there is any correlation between residential density and water consumption. It is understood that lawn and garden watering is the single greatest factor in water consumption in Regina. Lower density residential areas tend to have larger yards and often automatic sprinkler systems. It may be that consumption is inversely proportional to density.

Transit - a standard user fee is charged irrespective of distance travelled or frequency of use. The transit system is heavily subsidized from the general revenues of the City. Once a significant level of neighbourhood occupancy has been achieved, transit service is provided to all new residential subdivisions. The service is provided, based upon a walking distance maximum and frequency of service policy, and not on any of the characteristics (density, etc.) of the area. Some regard is given to the level of patronage in terms of the amount of transit service to areas of varying land use. Every effort is made to provide transit service to those streets where higher neighbourhood densities are constructed.

Fire and Police - these costly City services are provided to the City as a whole based upon their own indepedendent criteria. Residential density is in itself not a consideration. Fire hall locations are selected based upon a response time factor and a graduated scale which defines "risk to life" for different development types. High density residential buildings, regardless of where they are in the City, are in the highest risk category requiring the shortest response times. Therefore, high density developments in suburban areas will increase the need for additional fire halls. At the same time, however, a more compact city (higher density overall) is likely to require fewer fire halls.

Police protection services are provided from a single central police station. There is some evidence that crime rates, and therefore the need for Police protective services, are related to density. Higher density areas tend to be more crime prone. However, there are a variety of non density related socio-economic factors that are almost certainly of much greater significance. At this stage in the study no attempt has been made to correlate density of residential development with the need for police protection, particularly from a suburban perspective.

Parks - Provincial Legislation requires that, in all new development areas, a proportion of land be set aside for parks. This requirement is independent of any residential density considerations (except where 150 d.u./ha is proposed). In Regina, an attempt is being made to modify the manner in which park areas are provided and to develop that relationship with density of population as opposed to simply taking the fixed amount provided for by statute. The legislated requirement will however remain and consideration will be given to taking cash-in-lieu in order to provide larger parks that serve the needs of several subdivision areas.

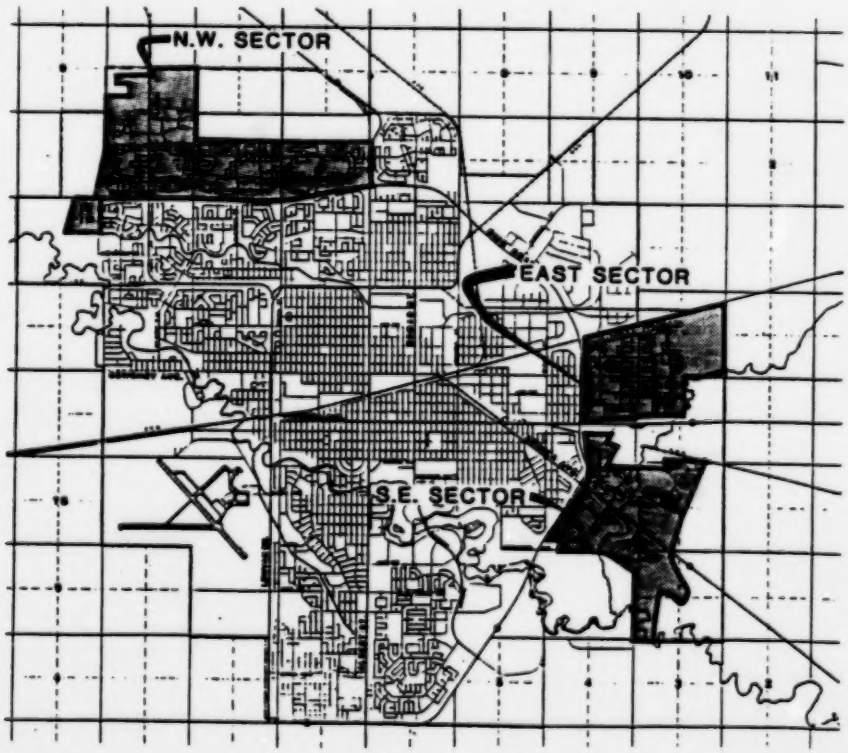
Schools - for which both capital and operating costs are financed independently from other civic operations. There are criteria for the location of elementary schools that are concerned with walking distances, geographic barriers and the proximity of park sites. Low density residential developments tend to be associated with a higher number of school age children when compared to high density residential building types. Socio-economic factors that exist in the different sectors of Regina's suburban areas also have a differential impact on schools. School size is in itself a variable. Detailed research would be required to determine whether there is an optimimum suburban residential density that will provide the appropriate number of school age children within the established walking distances.

Detailed Subdivision Densities

SECTOR	Subdivision	Area	Dwelling Units Developed AND Planned	Density	
		Net	Total	Net Hec.	Net Acres
N	Lakewood	63.9	841	13.17	5.3
O	McCarthy Park	43.2	929	21.53	8.7
R	Maple Ridge	11.5	190	16.52	6.7
T	Rochdale Park	23.0	585	25.48	10.3
H	Sherwood Estates	78.6	1377	17.53	7.1
W	Westhill Park	31.8	320	10.07	4.1
E	Argyle Park	84.3	1253	14.86	6.0
S	Walsh Acres	119.9	1359	11.33	4.6
T	Sub-total:	456	6854	15.03	6.1
S	Gardiner Park	52.2	651	12.46	5.0
O	Gardiner Heights	40.6	492	12.12	4.9
U	Richmond Place	29.8	119	4.00	1.6
T	University Park	61.0	840	13.76	5.6
H	University Pk.E.	26.3	359	13.65	5.5
E	Varsity Park	25.0	284	11.36	4.6
A	Wood Meadows	59.5	1112	18.68	7.6
S	Sub-total:	294	3857	13.10	5.3
T	Glencairn	147.9	2728	18.44	7.5
E	Glencairn Vill.	93.5	1994	21.32	8.6
A	Parkridge	43.9	488	11.11	4.5
S	Sub-total:	285	5209	18.26	7.4
T	Grand total:	1036	15920	15.37	6.2

DENSITY AND OPERATING COSTS

An extensive review and analysis to determine the correlation (if any) between property assessments and development density has been undertaken. Assessment values have been taken as a ready source of information that will indicate the amount of City income that is available to cover the continuing operating costs of urban services and infrastructure items. The 1979 policies and objectives were based upon the intuitive assumption that low density residential development resulted in higher costs to the City; and, higher densities would improve the benefit cost ratio. For the purposes of this study, the review has been limited to the southeast sector (University Park etc.), the east sector (Glencairn etc.) and the northwest sector (Walsh Acres etc.). Each of these sectors has been independently reviewed as illustrated on the map and table on this and the proceeding pages.



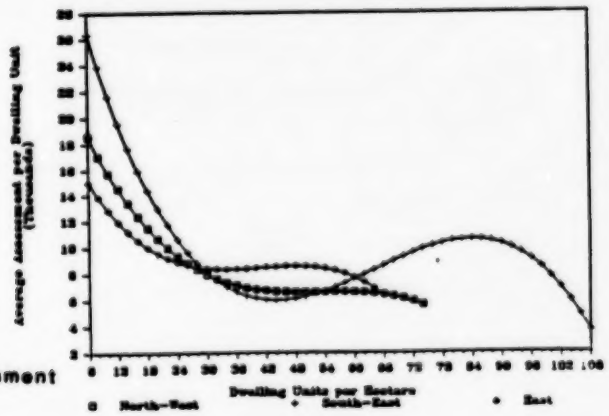
The analysis, which examined the relationship between the assessment values for any given density and the density levels indicates that, there are substantial differences between the North-West, the South-East and East sectors and that within the North-West and East sectors there is a direct correlation between residential density and assessment per hectare (see figure II). However, in the case of the South-East sector assessed value per hectare is constant over a broad band of density increases, i.e. from 14 to 40 d.u/ha.

The effect of the locational variations and their influence on the relationships between the density and assessment can be manifested in two ways.

a) The South-East sector provides the highest level of tax revenue to the City (average assessment per net hectare $214,000). This is in spite of the fact that the South-East average density is lower as compared to the North-West and the East sectors. The East sector, on the other hand, has both the average high density and the average low assessment per hectare ($171,000).

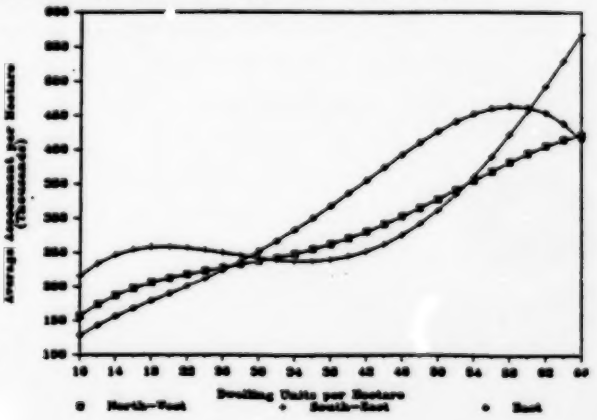
In other words, the previous intuitive assumption that an increase in densities would improve the cost/revenue balance to the City, is somewhat simplistic. Together with increasing densities, locational variation is a significant factor affecting the increase of assessment per hectare. Locational variations are affected by both the housing market and the level of assessment.

b. The rates of increase of assessment per hectare are more dramatic for sectors with average low assessment per hectare (Figures 10 & 11). The East sector, with the lowest overall average assessment per hectare, has a $140,000 assessment at 10 D.U./hec. compared to $280,000 at 34 d.u./hec. (100% growth)/ The North-West assessment/.per hectare starts from $150,000 and increases to $250,000 (66% growth). South-East, with the highest overall average assessment per hectare has only a marginal increase - from $220,000 at 10 D.U./hec. to $240,000 at 34 D.U./hec. (9% growth)



10. Density and Average Dwelling Unit Assessment

It can be argued that low densities are more "economical" in the South-East, and high densities are more "economical" in the North-West and, even more so, in the East sector. Again however, this oversimplification could lead to misinterpretations because density is only one out of a number of variables.



11. Density and Average Area Assessment

The South-East is the only sector that can reach an optimum assessment level at low densities. The optimal levels for the North-West and the East are achieved at extremely high densities, which would in themselves not provide a good living environment.

A cost revenue analysis using assessment values can be used to support a definition of targest densities. This is in turn based on the assumption that the current socio-economic conditions in the City will continue to support the present socio-economic division between the three sectors.

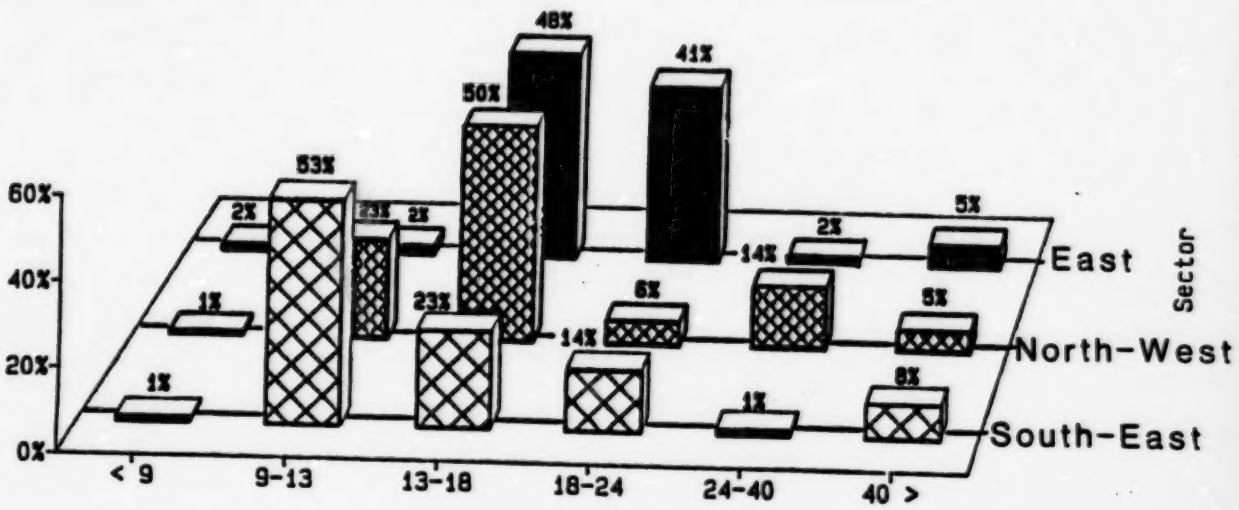
In other words, the analysis presented here, will be applicable for the prediction of assessment values given the location and the density of a proposed subdivision. Target densities could be established based upon a satisfactory minimum density in each sector that will ensure an equal cost/revenue balance in any developed hectare.

An additional assumption involves the combination of area and dwelling units, i.e. density: comparing a high density hectare to a low density hectare, City cost on residential services are either equal (for area services) or higher (for dwelling unit services). From this assumption, one should conclude that revenues from a given residential hectare will be either equal to or higher for high density as compared to low density. In Regina's residential areas, neighbourhoods with higher densities can provide a lower tax return per hectare as compared to low density neighbourhoods. For social and political reasons, however, one should be satisfied when the City achieves about equal tax return from every hectare.

In order to define a satisfactory minimum level of assessment per net hectare, it is necessary to identify the average expenditures for City services per net residential hectare. That value can support a better understanding of the amount which should be recovered by property tax (given also that the City receives additional revenues from business tax, government grants and various user fees). Unfortunately, although the total City expenditures on residential services (infrastructure and services) are known - exact measurements of the overall residential areas for the entire City are unavailable at present. Some interesting work in this area has apparently been undertaken in Edmonton, Alberta. Officials in the Planning and Building Department state that they have developed - quote - "a computerized fiscal impact mode to provide information to Council about how new development would affect the City's tax base."

We will be obtaining information on this model directly from Edmonton.

Density Distribution By Sector



EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE

A review has been undertaken to find information on policies and actions that are used in other jurisdictions. Many Canadian and American cities do have policies that affect suburban development.

The use of the development fee principle (hectarage assessment in Regina), to cover the capital cost aspects of new development is very common. Generally, the fee structure is fixed (as in Regina's case) and is based upon the estimated cost of infrastructural requirements. In a few cities, where environmental quality is considered to be of great importance, subjective criteria are used to vary the development fee. Bonus points are given for environmentally preferred features thereby reducing the cost to the developer. No case has been found where additional density was a bonus item. In Surrey, British Columbia, a low density is provided for in the zoning. Where the developer chooses or wishes to increase the density, the increase may be granted based upon circumstances favourable to the municipality. Such an arrangement could not easily be applied to Regina where the development industry has successfully resisted high densities in the suburban areas.

A number of cities have policies that aim to encourage a variety of housing types. The purpose in these cases is to encourage a socio-economic mix in the different residential neighbourhoods, i.e. policies are intended to encourage low and moderate income housing in areas that would otherwise only house the more affluent. No examples have been found where such policies have had any success in suburban areas. Indeed such policies are much more applicable to inner city housing, and have been successful in Toronto and Vancouver.

In those cases where any form of control is imposed on suburban growth, the objectives are invariably environmentally oriented. These include the preservation of agricultural land, or the protection of wild life sanctuaries or the avoidance of unstable land areas or flood plains. Some of these controls apply in Regina. However, with the open prairie stretching to the horizon in every direction, it is more difficult to rationalize control on suburban boundary expansion. The relocated rail lines, if that action occurs, would provide the perception of a boundary in Regina's northwest sector. It must be remembered that for people who are determined to live in very low density areas the options of White City, Balgonie, Pilot Butte, and Lumsden are close at hand.

RESTATING THE QUESTION

This study was undertaken to assess the impact of residential density variables in suburban areas, with respect to:

i) ensuring an affordable urban infrastructure; and,

ii) providing a good living environment

The first of these two objectives is measurable in finite terms. However, the second is subjective. A "good" living environment assumes an element of "affordability" but it must also be affected by many social and environmental variables.

Affordable Urban Infrastructure

Two general conclusions can be drawn with respect to the affordability of the urban infrastructure as it is affected by residential density.

a) The hectarage assessment fee system is intended to cover the capital costs attributable to subdivsions and suburban development. The hectarage assessment itself is a fixed fee and does not take account of many variables in suburban development. Such things as land use, development density and distance to and from a variety of facilities will affect the cost of infrastructure. For example, the infrastructural needs for a major shopping centre in a suburban location will be definitely different from those associated with the single family residential subdivision. There is no clear evidence, from this study, that residential densities lower than those anticipated in the 1979 policy plan, result in higher infrastructural capital costs. Further study is required to obtain more detail on this subject. Such further study must ensure a comprehensive point of view which includes the costs of all City services.

b) The operating costs of most City services are paid for from tax revenues in one way or another. Water rates, a part of transit costs and some recreational activity charges are exceptions. There are also grants from senior government levels for a variety of purposes. An indepth review and analysis of the relationship between taxes (or assessments) and suburban residential density has shown that density is but one of the variables. In some suburban areas there is a correlation between density and assessed values per hectare. Socio-economic factors are more important in other suburban areas.

A preliminary review has been undertaken to determine whether the costs attributable to suburban residential areas are equal to the tax revenue derived from those areas; or, whether the

inner city is subsidizing the suburban area. The indications are that no such subsidy occurs when inner city residential areas are compared with suburban residential areas. This conclusion may not be true when commercial and industrial properties are taken into account.

A Good Living Environment

The provision of a good living environment raises many subjective questions. In any city there are citizens with a wide range of life styles. For many the ideal is held out to be a large home on a large lot with a long view, next to a big park (therefore a home in a very low density situation). Because of its prairie location this ideal is perhaps more prevelent and more achievable in a small city like Regina than it is in so many other cities. Giving each individual person or family exactly what they want does not necessarily lead to the development of an ideal city. Civic priorities must be set if we are to develop an affordable and attractive city that has useful facilities available to all. The prairie climate imposes particular constraints in the shape and form of the city. Furthermore, the changing and aging population with fewer people per household in the suburban areas is likely to change our attitudes toward the ideal suburban plot.

For the purpose of this progress report it is felt to be appropriate to pose a number of questions relevent to the "good" environment.

a) Continued urban expansion can only occur at the expense of good farm land. DO WE WISH TO PUT SOME LIMITS ON URBAN EXPANSION IN ORDER TO PRESERVE FARM LAND?

b) Continued urban expansion leads to an extended transit network, to increasing demands for an extensive arterial

street network because more people are using cars and to a duplication of parking facilities in various places around the City. ARE WE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE EVER EXPANDING CONSEQUENCES OF IMPROVING OUR TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES THAT MUST RESULT FROM SUBURBAN GROWTH?

ARE WE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TRANSIT FOR ALL, REGARDLESS OF COST, OR SHOULD WE BE REDUCING THE LEVEL OF SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO LIVE IN LOW DENSITY SUBDIVISIONS AT THE EDGES OF OUR CITY?

c) Continued suburban expansion has occurred at the expense of the efficient use of inner city lands. If we are to achieve a greater efficiency in the use of inner city lands and its existing infrastructure then some restraints must be placed on suburban expansion. ARE WE PREPARED TO TAKE MEASURES TO REDUCE SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE INNER CITY DEVELOPMENT?

d) New suburban areas tend to provide housing for limited socio-economic groups. In an over simplification the more affluent tend to live in the suburbs leaving the poor and needy to live in the inner city. There is nevertheless, some truth to the statement. DO WE WISH TO ENSURE A FULL SOCIO-ECONOMIC MIX IN ALL PARTS OF THE CITY INCLUDING THE NEW SUBURBAN AREAS? IF WE DO CAN DENSITY CONTROLS BE EFFECTIVE IN PRODUCING THIS RESULT?

The legislative mechanisms of having approved policy objectives for suburban densities, adopted into a Development Plan, have proven to be ineffective. Taken by itself that does not mean that the new suburban developments have been bad. What it does mean that we must now rethink our objectives.

CONCLUSION

The suburban residential density policies, established in 1979 as part of the City's Official Development Plan, have not been achieved. Over the past 8 years suburban density has occurred at approximately 50% of the targets that were set. There are a number of consequences including the following:

-The City boundaries are expanding more quickly than was anticipated.

-The available land within the City's limits is being absorbed quicker than was expected.

-The hoped for socio-economic mix has not been achieved.

-There has been doubt as to whether the costs associated with development and continuing operation of the necessary urban infrastructure are being met.

The rationale for those 1979 policy objectives was in part subjective and was concerned with conditions that no longer apply. The late 1970's was a time of economic confidence and strong growth. In contrast, the late 1980's is a time of uncertainty and government restraint. Some of the objectives set, in order to facilitate an achievement of the 1979 objectives were never pursued. For instance, objective number three suggests that the City should expand its role as a land developer through land assembly programs and with the CMHC housing programs. Unlike Saskatoon, the City of Regina has refrained from major participation in the suburban residential market. A limited number of properties were aquired and developed but no expansion of that action ocurred since 1979. In recent years CMHC has withdrawn from many housing initiatives in the suburbs, and SHC has a reduced mandate.

This study indicates, in a preliminary way, that most of the city's infrastructural and service costs are being met both in terms of capital expenditures and in the operational sense. Even if further examination were to show a major shortfall, the mechanisms and procedures necessary to make up the difference are in place.

There is a growing concern over the ever-increasing cost of operating the City; taxes are too high! The City must adopt some policies of restraint if costs are to be kept within reasonable bounds, and taxation levels reduced or at least maintained. Slowing down the rate of suburban expansion, at any density, and facilitating inner city development may be a very desirable objective. With firm policy decisions, especially in the area of taxation and assessment, mechanisms can be development to achieve this objective. A continuing effort is required. Concurrent work is being undertaken in the area of encouraging downtown and inner City housing.

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